

V. Spiritual Life
C. Other Virtues

191.

Sermon, Book 2, No. 12

Humility
(incomplete)

"Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart."

To the unthoughtful mind there seems to be a vast discrepancy between the greatness of the teacher and the smallness of the teaching. The Son of God, Whose knowledge embraces all things created and increate, all times from [the] eternity that was before the worlds were made to the eternity that is to be when the worlds have run their course, is the teacher. And the lesson is: to be humble. We are not to learn of Him the things hidden under the splendor of the divinity, not the mysteries of created nature, the capabilities of spirit, the secret powers and elements of matter and organic life, but only to be lowly of mind, to think little of ourselves, to speak little of ourselves, to distrust our fair intentions, to lay no stress upon our talents, birth, rank, virtues, comeliness. "Learn of Me for I am humble of heart." There are many other things which the thirst for learning may lead us to enquire after. This is the only lesson that belongs to our peace.

Humility, says St. Bernard, is of two kinds: of the understanding and of the will. Humility of the understanding to know our littleness. Humility of the will to confess and love it. It requires only a very moderate exercise of reason to see that we are very unimportant parts of the great universe. Sometimes we put ourselves in comparison with God and murmur, because in fulfilling His designs He does not hesitate to cross our caprices. Now each one of us is but a mite in the little community of men making the city in which we live, so that if the public weal demanded it he would be bound to yield his own interests and even life. Then the city itself is but a speck in comparison with the nation. The whole nation is as nothing in comparison with the eight hundred million of the living generation. The generation that lives is but as nothing compared with the thousand generations hidden in the soil. All the generations of men are not equal in excellence to any one of the countless spirits that people the skies. And angels, men, are as if they were not, in the sight of God. What matter then is it in the midst of the ocean of being? What then is any one man that he should question the Almighty? A drop in the ocean of being, a grain of sand on the shores of time, an atom in the limitless universe of life: what is he, to make himself the center of events and demand that in the flow of ages, in the action of elements, in the operation of powers not only beyond his control but above his comprehension, his individuality, his schemes and desires be thought of and respected?

What is any man that God should be mindful of him, or the son of man that God should visit him?

In his origin he is nothing, in his end worms and corruption. Yesterday he was not, and the world did not need him. Tomorrow he will be gone, and posterity will not have time to read his epitaph.

Some men point to their ancestry as distinguishing them from the common herd, and plume themselves because they have the names of men conspicuous in history in their pedigree. But the mightiest of earth can transmit to their offspring only the blood of Adam and the curse of sin.

Others claim distinction for their learning and talents which are not theirs but God's. Yet with all our knowledge, the unknown still lies in the dust we tread on, and there are mysteries in every flower and grass blade that baffle our penetration. Instead of priding ourselves that we know so much we ought to humble ourselves that we know so little. Social rank and fame are made a motive of pride by poor human nature. But fame is no test of worth. In his times people spoke ill of Jesus Christ and well of His murderers. In our own times we have seen popular idols set up and worshipped, pulled down and shattered, in a way to make even children feel contempt for popular applause. And the deathless name that poets talk of is but a mockery of the heart's wishes. It means that while a man's body is in the grave and himself either in Heaven or Hell, school children learn to spell his name from lying histories, and repeat it with the same indifference as they repeat other words in the dictionary. Yet for this the poor human heart must be torn and bruised, the human brain wearied and tossed, human souls turned astray and lost to God forever! What a startle it will give us, in the Day of Judgment, to see in the light of truth and justice the end of human fame!

But is it not good, you will ask, to deserve fame? May we not be proud of virtue?

I answer, it is good to deserve fame, but we may not be proud of virtue. It is good to deserve fame, but not good enough to a soul capable of meriting God. If we were not to live forever it might be worthwhile to leave an epitaph on earth for the benefit of posterity. The soul that looks to human praise has already stooped from its flight towards God and is by its own act degraded.

We may not be proud of our virtue, because what we have is too imperfect and too little ours.

The Pharisee told God of his fastings, his tithes, his abstinence from certain sins. Yet he had not made the first step towards virtue which is to do things for God's sake and not from selfishness. Does not the greater part of our virtue consist in abstaining from sins which we have never had the occasion or the inclination to commit? We have never robbed or stolen; we were never pinched by want, or hardened by injustice. We have never murdered, but did we ever refrain from any act of vengeance when only the fear of God's displeasure restrained us? We go to the Sacraments. Is it not a routine which we would be uneasy at not following, or through fear that someone would exclaim against us if we were to stay away?

We give alms. Is it not because we are touched with human compassion, or because we would not be less liberal than our neighbors?

In the judgment day the question will not be merely what have you done but for whose sake did you do, and many things which appeared great to our self-conceit will be found very little and selfish in the judgment of God, and the very points wherein we wondered that our virtue went so far, may be the ones in which it should have gone much farther. As St. Gregory says, "What was bright in the estimation of the doer may appear foul in the analysis of the judge."

Then again, what virtue we have is the free gift of God. He softens our passions, He chooses our circumstances, He averts temptations, He sends light into our souls and lofty yearnings after the pure and truly good. What holiness we have is a light kindled by contact with Him, the Sun of Justice. Since He is ready to confer on us all sanctity, being infinitely beneficent, why are we not better than we are? Why are we so dull, so indeavour, so wrapped up in worldly affections and interests? Why are we always falling into our habitual sins, showing by our inconstancy, impatience, petulance, that we are seeking self and not God? Why are we not as free from faults, as full of charity, as the saints who have gone before us? The fault is ours, not God's. He stands at the door knocking, ready with limitless graces. We do not open to Him. Therefore what little virtue we have ought to be a source of shame to us, it being a proof of how much more we might have but for our own fault.

Whoever does feel pride in his own deeds has already accepted the standard of human estimation and forgotten the judgment of God. Proud virtue is false virtue and incipient apostasy.

But it is one thing to see our littleness, to see that in our origin, our ends, our mind and body, our surroundings, we are nothing, and another frankly to accept the truth and lovingly make it practical. This is what St. Francis of Sales calls loving our own abjection. It is true that we are nothing. Then we ought to be satisfied to have others speak of us as nothing, treat us as of no importance, disregard our wishes, interests, and person. And this is what St. Paul means by glorying in noting but the Cross of Christ. This is the cross which every one must take up who would go after the Redeemer. This is the immolation from which human selfishness blindly shrinks back. This is the beginning and distinctive character of Christian virtue, which though so natural and so obviously true, was never dreamed of by pagan philosophers and is lost sight of by all anti-Catholic sects. If we would begin to have virtue we must love to acknowledge our own littleness, and cheerfully accept the corresponding disregard and contempt.

Human pride, now called the spirit of the age, revolts against this doctrine and blindly calls it meanness of spirit. It cannot be meanness of spirit for it is truth. In the vast universe we are as nothing and there can be no pusillanimity in conferring the

192 - Humility Acknowledges the Truth

truth, and in allowing others to act upon it.

But this doctrine, says the infidel Gibbon, requires the surrender of personal dignity, of the spirit of freedom, of enterprise and industry. It requires no such thing. It requires not the surrender of personal dignity, but only the surrender of a false motive of dignity, a perverted spirit of freedom.

Although nothing to be proud of, we have our individuality and certain rights before our fellow men. These we may maintain, nay must maintain, not because they are ours, but because they are rights. We count for little in the universe but right is of infinite importance. Therefore we can be firm, in defense of what is ours in

192.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 23, 1875 (3)

[Humility Acknowledges the Truth]

One philosopher can always demolish another's system, but he cannot make a perfect system of his own. Human wit is powerful in denying but weak in affirming. Carlyle can prove this to be an age of shams. But, standing as he does on the brink of the grave, with nothing to look forward to beyond it, what a sham he must feel himself to be. Jesus Christ is "the True Light which enlighteneth every man coming into this world." How true is the saying of the Psalmist,

"Qui recedant a Te, in terra scribentur."

Humility is the acknowledgement of the truth. Whosoever judges, not according to a false standard, but just judgment, will acknowledge that he is nothing and God is everything, and that "for him to cleave to God" is the only good.

Apparently the Bishop was working from a slightly faulty memory. Jeremiah 17:13 has: *...recedentes a te, in terra scribentur...*

In the Douay translation revised by Challoner, this is, "O Lord, the hope of Israel: all that forsake thee shall be confounded: *they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth*: because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters."

193.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 20, 1875 (2)

[Obedience]

Obedience is one of the highest virtues--in fact it is the foundation of all other virtues. It is the virtue which our Lord wanted to be learned of Him. "Learn of me," He said, "for I am meek and humble of heart."

Obedience is willing dependence on another. The Catholic Church teaches it and

provides for it. To believe what she teaches is obedience of the understanding. To practice what she commands is obedience of the will. She teaches through the Vicar of Christ and the bishops in communion with him. To obey that teaching, therefore, is spiritual life. He denies his faith who obeys through worldly fear.

But they say it is mean-spirited and unworthy of a man to be hanging on another's words. They are slaves who obey. This is true--if they obey the wrong authority. But perfect obedience to right authority is security against the slavery of obeying a wrong one. He who hears the Church is in no danger of being led astray by the preachers and free-thinkers. He who does God's will is free from the slavery of his own passions and of human respect. "If Christ set you free, you shall be free indeed." He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned.

194.

Letter, *The Catholic Telegraph*, December 16, 1863

Great Western Sanitary Fair.

Under this heading we find in our daily papers, letters written to the committee, from which we select the following:--

LETTER FROM THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP ROSECRANS.

CINCINNATI, December 8, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR.--Of course I will give an autograph letter for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission. I could hardly refuse my right arm if it could serve those who may have lost theirs in the struggle for national unity.

Fifteen years ago last March, I remember standing on the deck of a little French steamer as she was gliding among the shipping into the port of Genoa. I was leaning on the guard, gazing almost vacantly, now at the distant city lying white on the mountain slope, and its background of snow-capped crests, and again at the bewildering variety of strange looking vessels all around. Suddenly, as we passed a giant man-of-war, she ran up her colors to greet the sunrise, and a thrill shot through my heart as I saw the glory of the morning sunlight stream upon our own "Stripes and Stars." It was an unexpected vision of home to me--of vast prairies and long lines of railroads, great rivers, crowded cities, green forests, smiling fields, friendly voices and loved faces, that took away all thought of the strange land I was entering; and, as an explanatory Italian at my elbow remarked to his neighbor, "The flag of the great Republic," I would not have exchanged my right to say "that flag is mine" for the grandest of the tottering thrones of Europe.

This little circumstance I might have forgotten, or recalled only to smile at my youthful enthusiasm, if the political struggles of the country had continued, during my

lifetime, to be what they used to be, a squabble for places, under the shadow of the flag. But the cannon aimed by the slave aristocracy at Sumter, in 1861, struck upon the chord that had slept for years, and when the flag was trailed in the dust by those who had been so prosperous and too favored under its protection, it flashed upon me, as upon all the Northern people, that our wealth, our vast resources, our prosperity and liberty, are nothing without our flag. So I heard the rallying cry in cities and towns and along the country roads, and saw the march of men hurrying to defend their own, with joy; and now, when the same men, but changed by exposure, hunger, cold, disease and wounds, are in a condition to be benefited by me, I hasten with alacrity to their aid. They are the pluck and hope of the nation. The meanest of them is ennobled by the cause he fought for, and in sympathy with them we honor the virtue by which alone liberty is deserved and perpetuated.

Hoping that God will bless you with success, I am, my dear sir, yours very respectfully.

S. H. ROSECRANS

195.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, January 17, 1857

Christian Prudence.

Prudence, to be Christian, must be joined to great disinterestedness and detachment from worldly aims. Our Lord describes it to be the "wisdom of the serpent" joined to the "simplicity of the dove." The wisdom of the serpent by itself is more cunning, often malignity. The simplicity of the dove by itself is sheer imbecility. The two rightly commingled, as the Spirit of God knows how to dispose them, make the perfect man.

Prudence is that species of wisdom which consists in the ability to form correct practical judgments upon actions to be performed. These practical judgments involve the solution of two doubts. 1st, Is the end worthy? and 2d, Is the action to be performed conducive to that end?

To solve the second doubt, in every day affairs, selfishness is as ready as grace. Avarice, ambition, sensuality, hatred, every passion sharpens the wit to compass its ends. The most avaricious trader is the shrewdest bargainer--the most ambitious is the wiliest schemer--the most sensual, the expertest voluptuary, the profoundest hater is the most far-reaching avenger. The folly of human prudence consists not in its inability to choose means, but in its thoughtless selection of ends.

Christian prudence solves both doubts correctly, choosing the worthiest end and the aptest means. There is but little difficulty in choosing wisely the last great end--eternal life, instead of eternal death. It is in the choice of means to attain that end,

consisting in our state of life, our application to particular pursuits, our management of affairs, our conversation amongst men, which, for the time being, we regard as ends, that the chief obstacle to its exercise is encountered. Here we have need of simplicity. Simplicity is derived from *simplex, without plait, or fold*. In its literal sense it excludes *composition* or *doubleness* of every kind. Metaphorically, it is predicated of a soul that has unswervingly but one single bent of aim. The soul alone that, in all the vicissitudes of human incident, in all the varieties of exterior excitement and agitation, is ever aiming at one single object, has simplicity. This steadiness of view implies freedom from passion, detachment from the world, disregard of self-love, an ardent thirst after the eternal, and great love for God.

When simplicity is joined to prudence, the latter is consummate. "If thine eye be single," says our Lord, "thy whole body shall be full of light," that is, if our heart be free from cupidity or prejudice, we shall be able to judge rapidly and accurately, the true bearing of all the hurrying circumstances of life. "The light in our whole body" will disclose to us our own interests, the interests of God, the nature of events passing around us, the views and motives of those with whom we come in contact, and thus enable us to shape our course wisely towards our great end.

Christian prudence is full of power. But the power is like that of God which never existed but in mercy and love.

196.

Sermon, *Ohio State Journal*, Feb. 28, 1874

Temperance.

(paraphrase/synopsis)

On Sunday afternoon, February 15, 1874, a large meeting of ladies was held at Town Street Church in Columbus to consider what plan should be adopted to advance the temperance movement. The movement, dubbed the "Women's War" and soon the "Women's Temperance Movement," was advancing across the country at this time. A follow-up meeting to advance the organizational effort was held on the morning of February 18 in the basement of First Presbyterian Church. Ladies from several churches were added to the Executive Committee, including Mrs. M. A. Daugherty of the Cathedral and Mrs. Going of St. Patrick Church. Four of the committee, strangely excluding both Mrs. Daugherty and Mrs. Going, were appointed to call on Bishop Rosecrans "with a view to obtaining the co-operation of the Catholic churches." Not surprisingly, only one of the city's German churches was represented on the committee. (Ohio State Journal Feb. 16 and 19, 1874) In conjunction with its account of a "mass meeting" held on Sunday, February 27, the Ohio State Journal of the next day included paraphrases of many sermons given at the various city churches. Bishop Rosecrans spoke at the Cathedral.

Right Rev. S. H. Rosecrans, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, delivered a sermon at the cathedral last night, the points of which were as follows:

The recent report in the daily papers of a committee of ladies having called upon him to secure his co-operation in their temperance movement gave the Bishop occasion to declare the teachings of the Catholic Church on the subject of temperance.

Temperance, in Catholic language, has a much wider meaning than abstinence from excessive drinking. It is one of the four cardinal virtues--so called, because they are the virtues on which hinge all the other virtues of both the natural and supernatural order. It means that virtue which strengthens the will against all manner of excess in good things, and holds it midway between the evil on the one hand of making too much, or on the other of making too little of what gratifies us in life.

Men lose their souls because they love earthly goods and fear earthly evils too much. If they were temperate they would prize both the evil and the good at their true worth, as disclosed by the Church's teaching, and would never be lost.

From this you see plainly that the custom now established of calling abstinence from hard drink *temperance*, is not a Catholic custom. No virtue in its proper sense can exist in the soul unless it has all its integrity.

A man may believe some doctrines of revelation, but if he doubts a single one of them he has not the virtue of faith.

So of hope and charity.

So a man may abstain from drink, yet be intemperate in eating; or he may be temperate in his diet, yet be intemperate in his judgments, views and language.

To have the virtue of temperance one must be free from excess in thought, word and deed. He must keep the straight in what he believes, in what he studies, in what he designs, in what he says and in what he does. He must not be turned aside by fear of danger, or allured by hope of gain. He must not be swung from his steadfastness by the joy of success, or the humiliation of defeat; by the applause of his fellows, or the hootings of the multitude; by the promise of life, or the threat of death.

With this understanding of the virtue of temperance, let us examine what is known as the temperance cause.

To abstain from intoxicating drinks does not straightway make a man virtuous. To be free from one vice does not insure freedom from all vices. The fact is, most men point out some vice that they are free from, and do so when their conscience troubles them. In the prison and the haunts of outcasts one may hear boastings of hardened wretches of the crimes they have never committed, of the meannesses they never stooped to.

In the Catholic countries of Southern Europe, where intemperance is rare, you never read or hear, in instructions to the people about gluttony, the advice to abstain totally from the use of wine. Of some saints it is told, as a marvel, that they never tasted

wine at all--or during Lent, or Advent. Wine there is as much an article of diet as tea or coffee here, and quite as harmless. Yet, there as here, and throughout the whole Church intemperance is denounced and condemned with the same emphasis, and for the same reasons.

These reasons, there as here, are:

1. The intrinsic malice of the sin which destroys the image of God in the soul, reducing man to a level with the brute.

2. The repeated prohibition of the sin by Almighty God under the most awful threats both in the old and new Law.

3. The disasters it brings upon its perpetrator and victim, which may be summed up thus: (a) the loss of God's Grace, which it, in common with other mortal sins, entails; (b) the spiritual blindness it brings upon the understanding, and the impotency to which it reduces the will; (c) the loss of health, strength and comeliness it brings upon the body, of good name upon the reputation, and of poverty upon the earthly fortune; (d) the crimes of which it is the occasion--such as impurities of all kinds, quarrels, murders, cruel treatment of families, brawls, and thefts and robberies.

We know the justice of these reasons, having seen them with our eyes, again and again set forth in the victims of intemperance we have known and perhaps buried.

Now all sin is infinitely hateful in the sight of God. Murder, adultery, robbery, blasphemy, impiety, hatred, envy, calumny, drive grace from the soul and condemn it to eternal punishment just the same as drunkenness. They, one and all, crucify the Son of God and put him to shame. Therefore the Catholic Church, spouse and mouthpiece of the Son of God, must hate all sin with infinite intensity. Hence she cannot sympathize with any movement to root out this sin, which, in order to effect its purpose, would willingly do injustice; or, the purpose accomplished, leave other sins festering in the heart, unrebuked. Ignorance and prejudice have ascribed to her the doctrine that "evil may be done that good may come of it;" that prisons and racks may be employed to make Christians--but this doctrine she has always abhorred and condemned. Why is Pius IX in prison now but because, being asked to sanction wrong, he answered, "We cannot."

The Catholic Church could not violate any right, though the empire of the world were the reward of the violation. Hence the Church cannot sympathize with those who, to reform their neighbors, propose to inflict penalties where there is no conscious or intended crime, or to coerce men by the aid of human law into abandoning what in their consciences they never believed to be wrong. And, not for the evils to human society, and liberty, which would soon follow, where one part of the community begins to think itself permitted to reach the good it proposed, by riding rough-shod over the convictions and imagined rights of the other, does the Church refuse her sanction to such a course, but because she essentially hates and abhors what is domineering and

oppressive.

Again: The Catholic Church can not sanction any movement that to destroy one vice would agree to leave the others undisturbed.

She has to look upon sin as God looks on it; and so she must detest pride and blasphemy and unbelief as she detests drunkenness. To her, corporal intoxication is no more loathsome than the spiritual intoxication which comes from pride, and which makes a man stand before the world and say, "Behold me! and be like me. I am sanctified *through and through*; nothing remains but to convert the rest of mankind--and if the law-givers and policemen will only place themselves under my directions, we will soon have that done and bring on the Millennium." When, therefore, it is proposed to make abstinence from drink supply the place of all other virtues--faith, hope, charity, piety, honesty, and atone for all other vices, such as unbelief, blasphemy, dishonesty, lying, oppression of the poor, the Catholic Church has no sympathy. God has no interest in the struggle between one sin and another--between one devil and another for supremacy over a soul. To such as propose a union of earthly motive against any single passion she simply says, "Go your way, you that are outside of the ark, for the brief time you are above the water in the sunshine. You and your fights and fondlings will soon sink beneath the waters to be known no more. There is no alliance between us, and no contest. I and those with me are bound for another shore, and our hearts are there already." But by thus repudiating all alliance and sympathy with worldly schemes to forward even good ends, the Church must not be understood to be blind or indifferent to the sin of intemperance as it exists among us.

The Bishop here drew a picture of the evils of intemperance in this country, resulting, as he said, from the eagerness with which we seek what we seek at all--from the force of evil example, and the poison of adulterated drinks. He mentioned with eulogy the St. Patrick's Total Abstinence Society, and exhorted all, particularly heads of families and young men, to enroll themselves among its members. He begged also all who prize the name of Catholic to have nothing to do with the keeping or frequenting of saloons. In conclusion he said: This duty of ours is not new, except as the day is new. Our duty every day is to conform our spirit to the spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ.

197.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 24, 1855

The Discipline of Youth.

Self-denial is the first lesson of wisdom. The best natural disposition, the most evenly balanced mind, will often experience interior opposition in the practice of virtue. Hence the necessity of habitual self-restraint. Now, children will not learn self-restraint by intuition, nor practice it spontaneously. They must be taught its utility, encouraged

by word, and directed by example, to exercise its particular acts.

Parents and teachers must not believe that it is sufficient to restrain the young from things merely unlawful: the desires even for lawful things must be curbed and held in check. Those who through foolish fondness allow children the gratification of their whims and caprices are both enemies of their true happiness.

The discipline of youth ought, therefore, to be steady, constant, vigilantly guarded, and to comprise regulations enjoining not only the observance of the moral law, but also of self-denials not strictly of obligation. Children should be allowed the indulgence of even their innocent caprices only as a matter of recreation, as something exceptional, to be thought of only once in a great while, just as, once in a great while, the bow is unbent that it may retain its elasticity to be restrung.

How can a child accustomed to trifle away time, to live by caprice without reference to reason, be convinced that life is awfully earnest, full of stern obligations, subject to terrible scrutiny, bound to appalling, because everlasting, consequences? Custom deadens the best feelings of nature, and the habit of disregarding them blinds reason to the plainest conclusions of admitted premises. The mountain child learns to gambol in the precipice's brink, and look smiling from the slippery crag into the dim seen bed of the torrent below. In like manner, whoever allows the young to trifle with the responsibilities of life, to evade them or fulfil them with but half a heart, teaches them to close their eyes to the plainest dictates of reason, to ignore a coming danger, to cast away an infinite good, and to barter the sublime destiny of intellectual beings for the sordid life of a brute. The end of discipline should be not only the preservation of order, but the practice of self-denial. Without self-denial no man ever achieved anything great, much less the salvation of his soul. Self-denial is the first element of success in life, as it is the foundation of all Christian virtue; and to inculcate it, no discipline is too rigid, no vigilance excessive.

198.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, November 18, 1876 (2)

[Christian Simplicity.]

Christian simplicity is too rare among Christians in our times. In old times it took refuge in the cloisters; now, in too many places, it has fled from thence also. St. Gregory the Great complained that double dealing was called politeness among his contemporaries. It is still so-called. Also policy, shrewdness, courtesy, good manners, &c. It is amusing to see the arguments with which some people seek to defend duplicity: "I cannot be sincere, because it will lay me at the mercy of every schemer, and thwart my plans." Why, then, form honest plans, aiming solely to please your Master and save your soul; and they cannot be thwarted. "But I cannot tell people I dislike and

199 - Moral Simplicity

despise my feelings towards them when I meet them." Do not, therefore, dislike or despise any one whom God has made your equal. "People will call me foolish if I always tell the plain truth." You can afford to have them call you foolish, if God calls you wise. There is no end to the quibbles by which departure from Christian simplicity is defended and excused. Like all other faults it draws with [it] a whole train of sins. In fact it "leavens the whole mass" of one's aims and affections, and, as in the case of the Pharisees, when occasion offers, brings about the most abominable crimes. We should never falter in our faith. Let others excuse by double dealing and craft, but for sincere Catholics, let them rather choose "to die in their simplicity."

199.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Aug. 28, 1875 (1)

[Moral Simplicity]

Simplicity by its derivation is "without fold" as of cloth or paper. In the moral character it is singleness of aim at what a man chooses to consider, the one thing necessary which makes him subordinate all other things to a statement of that one end. The sensualist, the avaricious, the ambitious, have a certain kind of simplicity. They do not allow conscience or natural affection, or even love of ease, to come between them and their purpose. The simplicity of the Christian is the living with the thought "God sees me" always uppermost. It cannot be attained in its perfection until the soul loses its regard for all that is fleeting and loves only what is eternal. But it must be attained to this degree, that the soul must regard all that is forbidden under pain of sin, as subordinate to God's will, or salvation is impossible.

200.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, September 5, 1857

Public Need of Honesty.

This is a money seeking, and money making age, but where is the use of accumulating property, if any one cunning enough to outwit you, or strong enough to overcome you, is allowed to strip you of your earnings and reduce you to poverty? What good does it to lay up funds in bank, if the banks break?--to invest in real estate if mobs by their violence destroy the value of landed property?--to loan money at percentage, if the debtor is going to cheat you out of both interest and principal? Honesty is one of the "wants of the age." It is needed, not so much *in* those who grow rich as *by* them. They want a place for safe investments and fair returns. It is said that money will buy anything--will it buy honesty? Will it bring out a good article of honest bankers, honest railroad speculators, honest stock jobbers? Will it make the receivers of

201 - Abstinence a Perfection, not a Virtue

deposits abstain from venturesome speculating, and conduct themselves as though they intended to pay back what they have received in trust? Will it establish well-grounded confidence between neighbor and neighbor in society? We fear not. Then nothing is left but the common schools and the public libraries--for the prevailing religion is powerless. Will these answer the purpose? Can you make a speculator cautious, a swindler scrupulous, by teaching children how to read, write and cipher? Can you correct the rage for money, which sears conscience out of the soul, by telling children that they must study hard, in order to become rich, and respectable in the world? Again, we fear not. Now, we suggest to influential people, that it would pay, in a pecuniary point of view, to instill into the minds of the young the fear of God's justice, the thirst after heaven, the contempt of earthly goods, the necessity of honest dealing, and of restoring ill-gotten goods. We would suggest that the plan of the Catholic schools of making a knowledge of the Ten Commandments, a part of common education, is, though not intended as such, no unwise political economy. Perhaps a few more financial crashes may make others of this opinion.

201.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 4, 1876 (2)

[Abstinence a Perfection, not a Virtue]

The practice of austerities not commanded is more than virtue. Fasts, mortifications, watchings, prayers, pious meditations, even the corporal chastising of the body are *perfections; counseled not enjoined*. They perfect the other Christian virtues, faith, hope and charity, but are nothing in God's sight, in the absence of those virtues; as gold candlesticks are nothing when there is no altar for them to adorn. A religious may practice poverty, chastity, and obedience; but if he is without faith or hope, or (especially) charity, his works are only "sounding brass." A man in the world may fast over what the Church commands; may hear Mass on week days; may give liberally to the Church and orphans; may abstain from permitted food and drink; and if he lack humility, detachment from the world, and (always especially) charity, go empty handed before the Judge when he dies. The ornaments of the virtues are only mockery, when the virtues are wanting.

It is in this view that we admire and applaud the Total Abstinence societies of this country. The members who really desire the perfection of self-denial in this regard, through charity towards neighbor and through devotion to the Sacred Thirst of Jesus Christ on the Cross, are far more numerous than many imagine. Some, doubtless, need the influence of example to give them strength against temptation.

It is not correct, however, to say that total abstinence is, of itself, a virtue. It is the perfection and completion of a virtue. There was no virtue which our Divine Lord had

201 - Abstinence a Perfection, not a Virtue

not. Yet He bore His cross and perfected His self-denial in other ways. In our eagerness to do good we must not teach error.